LEWIS, ROBERT MACK. The Unitary Development of a Dimensional Art Form. (1969)
Directed by: Mr. Walter Barker

The thesis is an attempt to resolve the problems inherent in the conception and development of a dimensional art form, based on the negative space found in a previously conceived grid-cube construction of my own design.

The thesis, consisting of ten perspective drawings and ten models of the unitary development of the whole, and a floor model of one of the units was exhibited in the Weatherspoon Gallery, University of North Carolina at Greensboro during January, 1969.

35mm color slides representing the exhibit are on file at the University of North Carolina Library in Greensboro.

THE UNITARY DEVELOPMENT OF A DIMENSIONAL ART FORM

by

Robert Mack Lewis

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
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Approved by

Walter Barker
Director

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Director Warren Barker

Oral Examination Committee Members

Warren Barker

January 14, 1968

Date of Examination

CATALOGUE

I. Perspective Drawings

Unit a
Unit b
Unit c
Unit d
Rectangular Composite Unit A
Rectangular Composite Unit B
Rectangular Composite Unit C
Horizontal Composite Unit I
Horizontal Composite Unit II
Complete Systematic Cube

a. Size: 15" X 15"
b. Medium: Pencil

II. Models

Unit a
Unit b
Unit c
Unit d
Rectangular Composite Unit A
Rectangular Composite Unit B
Rectangular Composite Unit C
Horizontal Composite Unit I
Horizontal Composite Unit II
Complete Systematic Cube

a. Size of Complete Cube: $10\frac{1}{2}$" X $10\frac{1}{2}$" X $10\frac{1}{2}$"
b. Scale: One-Twelfth Scale
c. Materials: Wood and Latex

III. Floor Piece

Floor Model of Horizontal Composite Unit II

a. Size of Floor Piece: 63" X 63" X 18"
b. Scale: One-Half Scale
c. Materials: Wood, Masonite, and Enamel

The thesis consisting of perspective drawings, models, and a floor piece was the outgrowth of a desire to convert negative space, present in one of my own grid-cube constructions, into a positive dimensional form. Theoretically, if the negative space in a given structural form is as important as the positive space, a positive dimensional form could reasonably and effectively be formed from it. The grid-cube construction was not shown as a part of the exhibition as it was felt that its design was made evident through the process of the thesis development. The exhibition was not retrospective of all work executed while in the graduate program, but simply demonstrated the evolution of a single concept that emphasized visual order.

Order was incorporate in the resulting cube through a development of module-like forms. The sixty-four basically cube-like modules formed a penetrated cube which accentuated a strong "part to part and part to whole" relationship. Sixteen square slabs projected from each of the six side planes of the cube. The general visual impression was of a waffled cube. After the concept was originated, no attempt was made to alter what was felt to be the unalterable symmetry of the cube, or to enhance it through refining the proportions.

Constructional values necessitated dividing the cube into sixteen rectangular composite units. The sixteen units were multiples of three unitary parts, each containing four variations of the single modular unit. Four unitary parts combined to make each of the four levels of the cube and to create the penetrations. The constructional division of the cube was designed to relate to the inherent modular appearance of the cube.

A concentrated effort was made to eliminate emotionalism in the work, and, as a result, intuitive actions were avoided during the execution of the construction. The end result of a depersonalized type of work, such as this, should belie as completely as possible the craftsman's personal touch. The decision to have many of the construction parts prefabricated was also based on the desire to depersonalize the work. Technological advancements are valid tools to be utilized in the solution of artistic problems. The pieces were spray painted to further eliminate any chance for a personal touch, in the form of brush strokes, to appear.

Working with symmetrical geometric forms was economical, both in time and materials. Standard parts could be used interchangeably, whereas different shaped parts would have been necessary for an asymmetrical design.

In regard to scale, one might ask why the dimensional form was designed to be as large as it was, or why it wasn't designed to be larger? In arriving at the decision to make the proposed structure 10' X 10' X 10', I was primarily motivated by a desire to induce the viewer to take several actions. Actions desired of the spectator, on viewing the structure were as follows: Look up, down, around the corners, and into the penetrations. Walk around and even climb onto the structure if so inclined. If the viewer should be motivated to do those things, he could not fail to react both visually and intellectually to the presence of the cube.

The cube's height should prevent a viewer from seeing over or onto its top, but should not prohibit a person of average dexterity from climbing it, though admittedly, not without some effort. The roughly forty foot walk around the cube seemed sufficient to assault the viewer with the presence or the "thingness" of the cube, while not so large as to be totally out of scale with his own height.

Limitations in funds and the size of the exhibition area did not allow for the construction of a full scale piece in concrete. Models, one-twelfth scale, demonstrated the unitary development of the proposed dimensional form, while a floor piece, one-half scale, was exhibited to demonstrate the visual merits of the thesis on a larger scale.

Wood, masonite, latex, and enamel were selected as materials for the models because they gave the impression of the mass of the proposed structure while limiting the weight of the floor piece. The pieces in the exhibition were sprayed flat white to specify the materials of the proposed structure, and to de-emphasize constructional values that might have distracted from the visual significance of the form.

The thesis was primarily concerned with order, basic form, mass, and the control of environmental space.